



The Special and the Ordinary

David Clapham

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Beautiful passages of this novel reflect the emotional impact of music upon young people's dreams.

David Clapham's *The Special and the Ordinary* tells the story of two friends as their lives unfold from the 1950s to the present day, exploring the depths of true friendship as well as what it means to achieve your dreams.

John is a quiet and careful boy who comes into the world with a passion for music. Martin is a clever, slick-talking boy whose quick wit and charisma manage to get him out of trouble. Together these two schoolboys form a friendship that continues even after they leave their quiet town. While Martin manages to talk his way into various opportunities, John discovers that his musical talent doesn't quite match his immense love for the art. Martin needs to find true satisfaction in a world that lets him get by on his cheeky charms, and John must come to terms with the fact that he will never be the great artist he dreamed of. Together and separately, the boys grow and mature as they find their way through the worlds of love, music, politics, religion, and work.

The novel manages to cover more than five decades in 236 pages by creating a series of brief vignettes that take place throughout the protagonists' lives. At times, *The Special and the Ordinary* feels more like a collection of short stories than a single story, but the vignettes are interwoven with characters who reappear throughout the boys' lives.

The writing is clear and refreshing, with clean sentences that move the story along at a brisk pace. Though the novel is not necessarily comedic, its wry prose captures the humor of daily life. Much of the plot is driven by dialogue between characters who all speak in their own distinct voices.

The eye-catching cover design uses simple elements on a black background. The front cover emphasizes the role that music has in the book, and the summary on the back cover is exceedingly thorough. Internal formatting is clean and as easy to read as the appealing prose itself.

John's attempts to break into the music world fill the story with beautiful passages on the emotional impact that music has upon us, and scenes from the music industry. This lovely coming-of-age story addresses a central theme for many: How do we find satisfaction in our lives? *The Special and the Ordinary* will immediately stand out to readers who love music.

CONSTANCE AUGUSTA A. ZABER (March 31, 2016)

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